

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 12, 2013

Meeting No.: 176

Project: 900 East Fort Avenue

Phase: Final

Location: Corner Lawrence Street and Fort Ave – Locust Point

PRESENTATION:

Toby Bozzuto of Bozzuto Development provided opening comments and turned the presentation over to Architect Rohit Anand of KTG Group who reminded the Panel of the importance of the site and its key role as a gateway to the Locust Point neighborhood. He reviewed the proposed changes and responses to the design prompted by the Panel's previous comments as follows:

- *Service Loading along Lawrence Street* – the location of the main service area would remain unchanged and, in fact, has increased in size. Frosted glass paneled roll-down doors would be employed to provide closure during non-service times.
- *Length of drop-off parking along Fort Avenue* – the drop-off area was reduced from four car lengths to three.
- *Corner Treatment* – the main Lawrence and Fort Avenue corner has been revised and the amount of open area increased. Revisions in plan geometry and the elimination of the diagonal corner, along with changes to the storefronts and signing diminish the relative confusion regarding the location of the main residential entrance to the project. The easternmost Fort Avenue corner was reinforced with vertical design elements intended to integrate and call attention to the main residential entrance location. Colorful graphic architectural forms used elsewhere in the project (vertical finwalls, the rooftop restaurant and an area overlooking the second level landscaped terrace) recall those themes.
- *Parking Garage Skin Treatment* – metal vertical fins or baffles were suggested as the major screening device for the garage facing the Inner Harbor and Key Highway.
- *Materials* – a palette of three colors of flush cementitious panels with concealed joints, layered to reinforce architectural relief, were proposed for most of the residential façade. The base treatment at the retail and street levels was proposed as metal/glass storefronts with masonry bays to differentiate the identity of individual retail units.

Justin Wilson of Mahan/Rykiel presented the landscape design for the project's public sidewalk areas along its three street-side faces. References to historic train tracks and the prior natural environment paired with the influence of its shared existing industrial context dominate the overall design aesthetic. Integrated treatment of storm water retention, movable wooden benches on casters, creative patterning of paving materials, and thoughtful selection of street trees and planting further complemented the design.

COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:

The Panel remains complimentary of a modern treatment for the project and agrees that the site has critical strategic importance and physical dominance. The landscape design shows great potential and was the highlight of the presentation. Although the building design has improved since the initial presentation, there remain considerable concerns regarding major aspects of the most recent design that require continued study and resolution:

1. **Overall Design Cohesion** – The Panel felt that the current design struggles to find unity, cohesion and design integrity and perhaps suffers from too many, somewhat capricious, design "moves". Edit and clarify. There is concern about the "super graphic" color treatment that will ultimately symbolize the project (particularly the red color) and how well it will fit in this

location. The rooftop restaurant form, as currently designed appears overpowering and a bit heavy handed.

2. **Main Entrance** – the main residential entrance to the project needs more integration and importance. Explore pulling the disparate horizontal and vertical forms together for a stronger, more resolved statement.
3. **Harbor Facade** – The façade facing the Harbor appears to have very little relationship with the Lawrence and Fort Avenue attitudes of the project and requires considerable study. The introduction of vertical components, changes in plane and differentiating corner features (as employed on the Fort Ave and Lawrence St facades) should be explored rather than the mostly horizontal layering currently proposed. Study ways to relate and integrate the two attitudes to diminish the scale and severe impact of the Harbor façade.
4. **Garage Treatment** – Clarify the screening intent of the parking garage element and consider revisiting the vertical fin treatment proposal. If it continues, please illustrate its effectiveness, particularly at night, from across the Harbor.
5. **General** – More detail of the design and its components are required for adequate review at the next presentation. Larger scale sections of corners, balconies, places where differing materials come together, storefront signing criteria, building signing, lighting etc would clarify the design intent.

PANEL ACTION:

Recommend continued refinement and return for Final Building Review. Recommend approval of Final Landscape Design

Attending: Toby Bozzuto, Jeff Kayce - Bozzuto Development
Alex Kopicki, Jeff Jacobson, EJ Rumpke – Solstice Partners Inc
Justin Wilson, Peng Gu – Mahan/Rykiel
Rohit Anand, Federico Soifer, Doug Martin – KTG Y Group, Inc Architecture + Planning
Will Jovel – LPCA
Kevin Litten - BBJ

Ms. Jones Allen, Messr. Bowden*, Burns (Mr. Haresign recused) - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon –Planning Department